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ABSTRACT

The learning needs relevant to a communicative approach to language teaching and the appropriate teaching methods are examined. Three alternatives perspectives on language use are discussed: structural, functional, and communicative. Taken together, these perspectives highlight the goal of foreign language learning: teaching the ability to use the language system creatively and to relate forms to functions appropriately in situations involving real meaning, real time, and actual interaction. Two models of language learning which might have different implications for language teaching methodology are considered: the skill learning model and the natural learning model. Practical suggestions for a communicative teaching methodology are offered. Four basic features of such an approach are: readiness to learn, insight into significant features of whatever behavior is to be learned, practice in producing the behavior, and feedback about the success of these attempts. (RW)

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A communicative approach to language-teaching methodology

William T. Littlewood

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CLCS Occasional Paper No.7

Autumn 1983

A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO LANGUAGE-TEACHING METHODOLOGY

by

WILLIAM T. LITTLEWOOD

A. INTRODUCTION

The term "communicative" refers, in the first instance, to the goals of language teaching rather than to its methodology. It indicates, quite simply, that we wish to equip learners with the ability to communicate. The communicative approach is therefore the first major approach which is labelled according to what the learner should be able to achieve as a result of it, rather than according to the teaching techniques that should be used. This is significant, since it serves to remind us that teaching methods are to be derived from a prior analysis of learning needs.

Since communicative refers primarily to learning goals, there is no single, fully worked-out teaching system that bears the label "communicative". This is another respect in which a communicative approach is different from most earlier approaches. The audio-lingual method or the direct method, for example, were associated with a coherent set of teaching techniques, but there is no comparable set of techniques which could be identified as a "communicative" method. The term could be used of any methodology that leads the learners towards the goal of communicative ability.

This means that the initiators of audio-lingual or audio-visual methods could have used the term "communicative" about their own approach to teaching. Their goal, too, was to teach people how to use a foreign language for everyday communication. However, if we now ask why they did not, in fact, use the term about themselves, we also come close to pinpointing the added dimension that characterizes a communicative approach: the use of the term reflects the fact that we now realize, more clearly than before, that teaching "communication" is not the same as teaching "language". The scope of language teaching has been broadened so that it becomes, in fact, communication teaching, which includes the teaching of language, but also goes beyond it.

We can see this added dimension most clearly, perhaps, if we consider the controversy of the 1960s, about the comparative effectiveness of habit-formation and rule-learning procedures.[1] There was never any doubt that the main criterion for judging effectiveness was: which procedures enable a learner to use creatively (i.e. communicate with) a language more efficiently? However, from our present viewpoint, a limitation in the scope of the debate was the implicit assumption that mastery of the linguistic system would be sufficient, on its own, to ensure communicative ability.

It is important to remember that what we now call a communicative approach is also concerned, like its predecessors, with enabling learners to master the linguistic system. Therefore, all the earlier debates and the techniques devised over the years have not been suddenly superseded. Rather, they have been carried forward and placed into a broader framework. This framework is based on a more complex and comprehensive view of two fundamental questions:

(a) What skills are necessary for using a language for communication?

(b) What kinds of learning contribute to these skills?

This paper will look at some possible answers to these two questions. It will then consider a third question:

(c) What are the possible consequences of (a) and (b) for our methods of teaching these skills?

The progression of the paper reflects the point made in the opening paragraph: that learning needs must be considered first and teaching methods must be made subordinate to them.

B. SKILLS FOR COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE USE

This question will be considered by looking at three alternative (but complementary) perspectives on language use: the structural perspective,[2] the functional perspective, and the communicative perspective.[3]

1. The structural perspective

There is a common misunderstanding that in a communicative approach, structural aspects of language become peripheral. This cannot be true. It would be tantamount to saying that by common consent of the language-teaching community, language had ceased to possess a grammatical system. Except perhaps for very restricted, "survival" purposes, it is obvious that people

communicate with each other by using the underlying system of the language. Whatever our approach, then, we cannot ignore structural aspects of language use. However, a communicative approach is clearly likely to have important implications for how we deal with them. For example:

(a) Very few learners aim for complete, native-speaker command of the foreign language. We can take this into account from the beginning of a course and concentrate on aspects of the language system which will help them to achieve the maximum of communicative ability in the time available. For example, learners might spend less time on features which have little communicative significance (e.g. memorizing which French verbs are followed by "à + infinitive" or which German prepositions take the accusative), enabling more time to be spent on mastering important tense distinctions or patterns which express important communicative functions (e.g. as in the next paragraph). This is, of course, a question of syllabus content rather than methodology.

(b) In order to allow more attention to be given, at early stages, to language which is useful for expressing important meanings in social interaction, we can often work with a "slot-and-filler" approach to grammatical patterns. This means that the learner's creative manipulation is restricted largely to inserting items into one or two slots in a fixed pattern. For example, many recent courses propose exercises where learners practise the function "asking directions":

Pour aller ... . , s'il vous plaît?

au stade

au cinéma

à la gare

or practise asking for items in a restaurant:

Ich möchte bitte .....

ein Glas Wein

eine Limonade

einen Kaffee

at a very early stage, without learning any of the further grammatical implications of "pour + infinitive" or the German subjunctive form.

This procedure bears some resemblance to a phenomenon

observed in first language learning and natural second language learning. Here, learners seem to memorize similar kinds of "prefabricated patterns" some time before they acquire the grammar that underlies them.[3] There is evidence that natural learners gradually learn, by spontaneous processes, to analyse these chunks and perceive their internal structure. Only experience will show to what extent this same process occurs with classroom learners and, therefore, to what extent the "slot-and-filler" approach contributes to the learners' eventual creative mastery of the language system. This is a crucial question, in view of the frequent use made of these procedures in communicatively-based teaching materials.

(c) The mention which I just made of "spontaneous processes" indicates another way in which a communicative approach may take a different approach towards grammar from most previous approaches. We are now more strongly aware than before that the underlying system can be learnt not only by focussing on specific grammatical points, but also by natural, unconscious processes (these are often referred to as proceses of "acquisition" rather than "learning"). This means that learning can take place independently of explicit teaching. We will return to this point in section C.

2. The functional perspective

This is perhaps the perspective for which the communicative approach is best known and the most crucial dimension that distinguishes it from earlier approaches. It can be traced to philosophers such as Austin and Searle, and linguists such as Halliday and Hymes, who first highlighted the fact that when we speak, we "do things" with words. We speak because we have a communicative purpose and choose language which is appropriate to this purpose. To use the most common term: we use language which performs the desired communicative function in an appropriate way.

A purely structural knowledge of the language is not enough for us to know what ways are appropriate for expressing a particular communicative function. We also need to know the conventions for using the language system in social situations. This was clearly illustrated for me on one of my own first visits to Germany. When I wanted to pay the bill in a restaurant, I asked the waiter Darf ich bitte zahlen?, which is the structural equivalent of English Can I pay please? The waiter corrected me, saying that I was over-polite and should say simply Zahlen, bitte! In other words, though I had used a form which was structurally correct, it was not an appropriate way of performing that particular communicative function in that situation: it conformed to the rules of the system but not to the rules for using that system in order to communicate.

Learning to communicate thus means not only learning the forms of language, but also learning to relate forms to functions

in appropriate ways. This dimension of language use is recognized, of course, in the examples given in the previous section. There, we saw how learners can practise language which relates to a clear communicative function (e.g. "asking directions") and which is an appropriate way of performing that function in real situations (e.g. Pour aller à la gare, s'il vous plaît?). If their learning is successful, we may hope that they will be able to avoid using English-based forms such as Pouvez-vous me dire le chemin à la gare? We may also hope that their motivation will benefit from the fact that they have opportunities to see, right from the start, the functional usefulness of the forms they are learning.

The issue is made more complex because there is usually a wide variety of forms that a speaker could use for expressing a given communicative purpose. Often, a particular form is appropriate in some social situations but not in others. For example, I could disagree with a friend's statement by saying Du machst wohl Witze! (literally, "You're making jokes!"), but could not use the same form with a stranger, unless I intended to be insulting. On the other hand, Meiner Meinung nach stimmt das nicht ganz would be suitable with a stranger but not in some informal situations amongst friends.

Learners may need to master only one or two ways of performing a particular function in their own speech. However, they will hear a greater variety in the speech of native speakers. They therefore need a more extensive repertoire for receptive than for productive purposes.

Not only may one function be expressed by several forms. A further complication is that one particular form might perform several functions, depending on the situation where it is used. For example, Sind Sie mit der Zeitung fertig? could be a simple enquiry about whether the hearer has finished with the newspaper, but it could also be intended as a request for the hearer to pass the newspaper to the speaker. It could even perform a communicative function which is totally unrelated to the newspaper itself, such as reminding the hearer that it is time to go shopping. This potential ambiguity presents difficulties for learners both in production and reception: they may choose a form which, in a specific situation, conveys a different meaning from the one intended, or they may fail to interpret the meaning intended by another speaker.

3. The communicative perspective

When we begin to examine how people integrate their structural and functional knowledge of language in order to convey and understand real meanings in real time, we take a fully communicative perspective on language use. The communicative perspective is thus one which combines the structural and functional views, and adds the important dimension of actual exchange of meanings.

As we saw at the end of the previous paragraph, most pieces of language can convey a variety of meanings, depending on the situation. It is therefore not enough for learners to have some kind of abstract knowledge of possible relationships between forms and functions. They must also learn to operationalize this knowledge in order to negotiate intended meanings in real interaction. As hearers, they must interpret the meaning that a speaker intends, by relating the language to the overall situation and the knowledge that they share. As speakers, they must also take the situation and shared knowledge into account, in order to select appropriate forms for the meanings they wish to express. If they cannot find appropriate forms in their repertoire, they must learn to use communicative strategies, such as simplification or paraphrase, in order to get their meanings across. In addition, they must read the feedback from the listener, in order to judge whether they have been understood as intended; if necessary, they must reformulate what they wanted to express.

In communicative situations, learners usually have no chance to reflect about their performance, as they have in many classroom exercises. They must perform in real time, producing immediate responses or interpretations. This creates another important dimension of difficulty, for which their classroom activities must prepare them.

Whereas the two previous perspectives provided, to some extent, specific items which could be taught (e.g. structures, or appropriate forms for important communicative functions), the communicative perspective focusses on the process of communicating. Learners must develop the necessary skills and strategies for themselves, through using language to express and interpret meanings. This has far-reaching implications for teaching methodology, since it means that we must provide opportunities for learners to develop their communicative ability through activities which resemble, in significant ways, the kinds of communication they will experience outside the classroom.

From the discussion in this main section, we can summarize the goal of foreign language learning as follows:

Ability to:	In situations involving:
Use the language system creatively	Real meanings
	Real time
Relate forms to functions appropriately	Actual interaction

C. TWO MODELS OF LEARNING

In the previous section we looked at the goal of foreign language learning - communicative language use - from three perspectives. In this section we will consider the learning process itself and, in particular, two models of language learning which might have different implications for language-teaching methodology: the "skill-learning" model and the "natural learning" model.

1. The skill-learning model

This is the model which underlies most foreign language teaching practice at present. It views foreign language use as a performance skill. As with other forms of skill, fluent performance can be achieved through two main kinds of practice (there is no sharp dividing line between them):

(a) Part-skill training, in which the total skill (here: communicative ability) is divided into separate components. These components can then be treated separately from the total skill. For example, a foreign language learner may practise individual sounds, structures or functions.

(b) Whole-task practice, in which the individual part-skills have to be integrated in performing the total skill. In the case of the foreign language learner, this involves using the language in order to express or interpret meanings.

In the first kind of practice the purpose is usually to produce behaviour which conforms, as closely as possible, to the target model. Therefore, learners usually expect (and receive) feedback which informs them of the accuracy of their performance, including the correction of mistakes.

In the second kind of practice accurate performance may also be a goal. However, there must also be a further purpose, related to the reasons for performing the whole task. For foreign language learners, this is to communicate meanings. Therefore, they will also need feedback which informs them of their success in communication.

We can refer to part-skill training as "pre-communicative" activity, because its function is to prepare learners for communication. We can refer to whole-task practice as "communicative" activity, because learners are now integrating their separate skills for communicative purposes. Within each kind of activity, of course, there can be a wide variety of difficulty levels. For example, communicative activity can take place in a limited situation, where the meanings and language are fairly predictable, or in an unstructured situation, where unpredictable demands may be made on learners' linguistic and

social skills.[4]

Referring to the diagram at the end of section B, we can say that part-skill training is most likely to involve either the structural or the functional perspective on language, depending on whether the practice emphasizes the mastery of some aspect of language or the performance of some communicative function. The emphasis may also be evenly spread over structural and functional aspects. With whole-task practice, we are moving into a fuller communicative perspective. However, we ought not to think in terms of strict divisions, since it is rather a matter of emphasis.

Even though the skill-learning model is a long-established one in foreign language teaching (it underlies the familiar progression from "presentation" to "practice" to "creative use"), there are several ways in which a communicative approach adds further dimensions to, say, the audio-lingual account. For example:

(a) It recognizes a wider variety of part-skills, including not only the language system but also communicative functions, conversation skills (e.g. how to take up a turn), communication strategies, and so on.

(b) It places traditional procedures into a new framework. They must be re-evaluated according to how they contribute to the broader conception of communicative ability, as outlined in section B.

(c) It provides a wider definition of what constitutes "whole-task practice". This must include not only the manipulation of the language system, but also the use of this system for communicating personal meanings.

(d) Perhaps most important of all, it emphasizes the importance of various forms of whole-task practice. Thus, many activities which we have often viewed as "optional extras", to be enjoyed if there is time (e.g. discussion, role-playing), move into the central core of our methodology.

2. The natural learning model

This second model of learning has developed primarily as a result of research into how children acquire their first language and how people acquire a second language in natural settings. This research shows how learners can internalize the second language system independently, even without the help of instruction. They can develop knowledge and skills through natural processes, in response to their exposure to the language. The learning process is sometimes called one of "creative construction", emphasizing that learners participate actively in constructing their knowledge of the language.[5]

Natural learners do not construct their knowledge by mastering one structure after the other, in a graded progression such as the one contained in a typical teaching syllabus. They approach the whole language in a global way. In the early stages, they impose their own simplified system on the language, and gradually complexify this system until - for those who progress far enough - it corresponds to the one used by adult native speakers. In the process, of course, learners produce a large proportion of utterances that are "wrong" by comparison with the target system. However, it can be argued that they are "right" in terms of the system that the specific learner is operating at a particular time.

The research studies carried out so far suggest that there are typical stages which natural second language learners pass through in acquiring various structures. In acquiring negatives, for example, they seem to go through a stage where they simply place a negative element before the verb (e.g. I no like that - similar examples are available for languages other than English). Later, don't is used, but it is not changed to show different persons or tenses. Gradually, learners begin to make these changes as they are required. To use a common term, it appears that learners have a "built-in syllabus", which is guided by their natural processing mechanisms and tries to take them through the new language along paths which, to some extent, have been pre-programmed.

If this is so, it is clear that the classroom learner too must possess the same built-in mechanisms for processing the language. Some implications of this for language teaching might be:

(a) When the built-in syllabus is leading the learner in different directions from the teaching syllabus, teaching will be especially difficult, and there will be a larger proportion of errors.

(b) What we call "errors" are, in any case, a natural accompaniment to language learning, since they show how learners are constructing their knowledge through built-in processing mechanisms.

(c) We should try to exploit these mechanisms in the classroom, by setting up conditions in which they can operate and produce learning.

This brings us to what is, perhaps, the most crucial question for language teaching within the natural learning model, namely: what are the conditions that cause natural learning mechanisms to operate? An answer to this question would give valuable information about how we should structure activities in order to facilitate learning. Unfortunately, no definite or detailed answer is possible. However, observation of different kinds of learner has led many people to believe that the most crucial factors include:

- Involvement in communicative interaction with the foreign language.

- Exposure to language which is comprehensible, relevant and interesting.

- Positive feelings towards the language and the learning situation.

- Communicative needs which the language can help the learner to satisfy.

If we transfer the natural learning model to the classroom, it would seem to have different practical implications from the skill-learning model discussed earlier. Above all, it would imply that we should not try to exert direct control over the learning process, e.g. through the conscious teaching of new items or drilling of structures. Rather, we should concentrate on creating situations for communicative language use - both productive and receptive - so that learners have opportunities and motivation to experience the new language and internalize its system through their natural processing mechanisms.

3. Reconciling the two models in practice

A common feature of both models is that they emphasize the importance of using the language for communication. Within the skill-learning framework, communicative language use constitutes whole-task practice and serves to integrate the part-skills which have been mastered separately. Within the natural learning framework, communicative use provides opportunities for the learners' natural mechanisms to operate.

The major difference is that, in a literal interpretation of the natural learning model, there is no place for part-skill training. The teacher should leave the learners to develop their own representation of the foreign language, in response to exposure and communicative needs, rather than attempt to control this development by imposing individual parts of the system in an ordered sequence. Also, since the learners' internal representation of the system is the crucial source of their creative language use, the teacher should leave productive skills to develop naturally, rather than require the learners to perform (e.g. by imitation) with language for which they have not yet internalized the underlying system.

An approach based on the natural learning model alone has intuitive appeal for language teachers, since it emphasizes language learning as a process of natural growth. The crucial question is whether such an approach can be made fully operational in the classroom. For example, can we devise the appropriate techniques and activities through which classroom learners can be exposed to the kinds of input and the kinds of interaction which stimulate natural learning processes? The

proponents of the "natural approach" to language teaching believe that we can and claim that they have tested the approach successfully, at least with groups of adults.[6] It remains to be seen, however, whether an approach based on natural learning is feasible in other kinds of learning situation.

As things stand at present, then, a more acceptable form of synthesis for most learning situations would seem to be one which builds on the overlap between the two models, as mentioned above, but does not reject the element of part-skill training which is contained in the skill-learning model. The methodological framework would cater for the demands of both models as follows:

(a) Communicative language use provides:

(i) whole-task practice, from a skill-learning perspective;

(ii) opportunities for natural mechanisms to operate, from a natural learning perspective.

(b) Pre-communicative activities provide:

(i) part-skill training, within a skill-learning framework;

(ii) another source of input, within a natural learning framework.

We might mention here the "monitor theory" of Stephen Krashen.[7] Krashen emphasizes the distinction between "learning" (which he defines as conscious learning) and "acquisition" (which he defines as subconscious, natural learning). He argues that acquisition is the essential process in foreign language learning, but that consciously learned material may be available to foreign language learners when they want to "monitor" their speech in order to improve its accuracy. Within this theory, part-skill training would contribute mainly (though not exclusively) to this store of consciously learned material.

D. PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS FOR A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING METHODOLOGY

We have now looked at three perspectives on language (in section B). One of these (the "communicative" perspective) embraces the other two (the "structural" and "functional") to give an account of how language forms are related to communicative functions in the exchange of real meanings in real situations.

We have also looked (in section C) at two models of learning: the "skill-learning model" and the "natural learning model". We have considered how their demands can be synthesized within a methodological framework.

In this section, I will suggest some practical conclusions. It is convenient to do this by relating the previous discussion to what are often regarded as four basic learning requirements in many forms of human learning.[8] These are:

(a) Readiness to learn (e.g. motivation, receptiveness).

(b) Insight into the significant features of whatever behaviour is to be learnt (e.g. as a result of observation or instruction).

(c) Practice in producing the behaviour that is to be learnt (this may be more or less controlled).

(d) Feedback about the success of these attempts to produce the behaviour.

These requirements are of a general nature and may be satisfied in a large variety of ways (not all equally efficient, of course). If we consider how they might be satisfied in (i) part-skill training and (ii) communicative language use, bearing in mind the earlier discussion about the nature of communicative ability and the two models of learning, we may arrive at an outline for a communicative approach such as the following:

(a) Readiness to learn:

(i) In part-skill training, important factors are clear objectives, relevance to goals, and a feeling of success.

(ii) In communicative use, learners need a sense of communicative purpose and involvement.

(iii) In all activities, readiness is helped by communicative need for the foreign language, favourable attitudes, positive classroom relationships, and a receptive psychological state.

(b) Insight into significant features:

(i) In part-skill training, the teacher usually gives guidance about what features are significant (e.g. pointing out patterns or functions). Structures and functions are often presented in an organized sequence.

(ii) In communicative use, learners discover many of the significant features for themselves, and seek effective communicative strategies as well as structural and functional features. The sequence of discovery will be strongly influenced by natural mechanisms.

(iii) In all activities, insight may be conscious or unconscious. However, conscious insight will predominate in part-skill training, unconscious insight in communicative language use.

(c) Practice in producing the behaviour (productive and receptive):

(i) In part-skill training, practice is often controlled at a detailed level, e.g. specifying the language or functions to be used. Learners often focus on language more than meaning, though the link between language and meaning should not be lost.

(ii) In communicative use, control is often at a higher level. For example, the teacher may provide a communicative purpose by creating an information gap or difference of opinion which the learners must overcome, e.g. in a communication task or role-playing activity. The learners' focus will be more strongly on meanings than on the actual forms of language used.

(iii) In all activities, practice must relate as closely as possible to the interests and identities of the learners, so that they are better motivated to use the language. Learners need to initiate - e.g. in pair- or group-work - as well as responding to the teacher. When possible, situations, tasks and materials should seem authentic to the learners, in order to stimulate involvement and prepare for future needs. In due course, learners should be equipped to cope with everyday classroom needs in the foreign language.

(d) Feedback about success:

(i) In part-skill training, feedback will often consist of correction and advice which relate to the formal accuracy or appropriacy of the language used. The main source of feedback will be the teacher, who has knowledge of the target behaviour, or from materials (e.g. tapes).

(ii) In communicative use, it is important that feedback should relate to the communicative effect of the learners' utterances. It may come not only from the teacher but also from the reactions of other learners, or it may be intrinsic to the task (e.g. exchanging information successfully). If the teacher also gives feedback about accuracy or appropriateness, this may be delayed till after the communicative activity itself.

These points can be summarized in the diagram printed on page 15. It is a two-dimensional diagram, relating four basic learning requirements to two components of the methodology. One could imagine a third dimension, covering the three perspectives on language use discussed in section B.

It should be emphasized strongly that the diagram and the foregoing outline are intended as a conceptual framework for viewing activities, but that in practice the different components cannot be sharply differentiated. There is always a continuum between categories rather than a strict division, and activities are distinguished mainly by their varying balance of emphasis. For example, many activities will involve both an element of teacher-guidance and an element of learner-discovery as sources of insight, but they will vary in proportionate emphasis.

Some Features of a Communicative Approach

to Language-Teaching Methodology

	PART-SKILL TRAINING	COMMUNICATIVE USE
Readiness to learn	Clear objectives. Relevance. Success.	Communicative purpose. Involvement.
	Communicative need. Favourable attitudes. Positive relationships. Receptive state.	
Insight into features	Teacher guides. Controlled sequences. Structures and functions.	Learner discovers. Natural sequences. Communicative strategies.
	"Learning" ← → "Acquisition"	
Practice (receptive and productive)	Pre-communicative activity. Language often controlled. Focus on language produced.	Communicative activity. Less detailed control. Focus on meanings conveyed.
	Relate to interests and identities of learners. Learners initiate and respond, e.g. in pairs, groups. "Authentic" situations, materials, tasks. Communicative needs of the classroom situation.	
Feedback	Accuracy and appropriacy. From teacher or materials.	Communicative effect. ±Accuracy and appropriacy. From teacher, learners, task.

E. CONCLUSION

For the teacher, a communicative approach represents both a liberation and a new range of responsibilities.

It is a liberation in the sense that the teacher is no longer confined to a methodological strait-jacket constructed from other people's theories. It has become clear that nobody has discovered a single, indisputable route towards communicative ability in a foreign language. Rather, we must assume at present that there are a number of possible routes, which depend on the learner, the teacher, and their situation. Thus, it is important to note that the framework given in the previous section is not a set of prescriptions, but a suggested outline of strategies, derived from the nature of the goal and of different kinds of learning.

The new range of responsibilities emerges, in the first instance, from the fact just mentioned. Since there are no prescriptions, the onus is much more firmly on the teacher to decide how he or she will teach. Referring to the previous sections, perhaps the most crucial decision area of all, especially in view of the present state of uncertainty about what "works" and what does not, is to seek an appropriate balance between part-skill training (pre-communicative activity) and whole-task practice (communicative use) in its various forms.

For part-skill training, techniques have been developed over a long period of time. A communicative approach may entail shifts of emphasis (e.g. less learning of paradigms, more contextualized practice) and in some cases, new forms of practice (e.g. in some situations, controlled pair-work is comparatively unfamiliar). On the whole, however, the teacher is working within a familiar framework and has a repertoire of activities from which to select. It is in the "communicative" component of the methodology that the most uncertainty is likely to arise. For example, we need to develop more practical techniques for stimulating the exchange of meanings in the classroom; we need to work out how these relate - in general and in detail - to more traditional forms of activity; we need to examine possible ways of grading activities in communicative terms; for many activities, we need to become accustomed to a different role from the familiar one - that of "facilitator of learning" rather than "instructor". This may involve, for example, organizing rather than directly teaching; initiating and stepping away from the centre of the stage; resisting the urge to interrupt when this would interfere with an activity; and allowing a freedom of interaction which is often associated, in the pedagogical mind, with possible chaos.

Because so many aspects of a communicative approach to methodology are as yet unproven and unfamiliar, we must often tread carefully, making sure that we understand where the way is taking us. Above all, I believe that it is important to conceive

the approach as a well-founded but gradual broadening of perspective and repertoire, not as a sudden upheaval or - even worse - as a new orthodoxy into which we must now constrain our thinking.

Notes

1. A summary of the main issues in this controversy can be found in Rivers (1981, pp.38-52) or Stern (1983, pp.324-9).

2. Discussion relevant to these different perspectives can be found in Brumfit and Johnson (1979), Candlin (1981), Johnson (1982), Littlewood (1981), and Wilkins (1976). These books also discuss implications for language teaching.

3. Examples can be found in Littlewood (forthcoming).

4. Specific examples of various kinds of activity are given in Littlewood (1981).

5. Further discussion of the "creative construction" process can be found in Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), Krashen (1982), and Littlewood (forthcoming).

6. The "natural approach" and its theoretical foundations are described in Krashen and Terrell (1983).

7. The "monitor model" is described in Krashen (1982) and several other works by Krashen.

8. These basic learning requirements are derived from accounts of various kinds of human learning, e.g. in Bandura (1977), Welford (1976), Wingfield (1979).

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6. S. M. Devitt, D. G. Little, S. P. Ó Conchúir, D. M. Singleton, *Learning Irish with Anois is Arís* (128pp.)

Autumn 1983

7. William T. Littlewood, *A communicative approach to language-teaching methodology* (19pp.)

8. Rose Maclaran, *On the interaction of semantics and pragmatics* (18pp.)

9. E. M. Harding, *Compensation strategies* (54pp.)